BIRD-*WORD*: A BIRDWATCHER'S LEXICON Compiled by S. Ashok Kumar

COUNTERSHADING Darker colour on the side that is turned towards light (back or top) and lighter hue on the opposite side (underside or belly). Countershading has thus survival value, deriving protection from camouflage. Also called obliterative shading. [*In water the dark back of a Penguin minimises reflection, the light coloured belly reduces the darkness of its shadow. Penguin is less visible to predatory seals due to counter shading.* Joy of Nature]

COURTSHIP Behaviour patterns shown by male and female animals during breeding season; the process of pair-formation.

COVERTS Quill feathers that cover the whole wing above and below and on the upper part of the tail feathers. Coverts are based in the fold of skin called patagium.

CRECHE In colonial nesting birds such as terns, penguins, flamingos, *etc*., the young are fed by adults for short periods after which they are fed by many adults. Such an assembly of young birds is called creche.

CREPUSCULAR Active at twilight.

CROP Enlarged portion of the lower end of the gullet (oesophagus) which functions as a storage chamber. Crop appears chiefly in granivorous birds such as pigeons, parrots, finches, buntings, game birds, *etc*.

CRUS The distal segment of the leg containing the tibio-tarsus and entirely feathered. It is popularly known as the "drumstick".

CUBITALS Feather attached behind the ulna of forearm. Also called secondary feathers or secondaries.

CUCKOLDRY Forced mating as in Mallards.

CURSORIAL Having limbs adapted for running. Eg: Stone-curlews, coursers, prantincole, *etc*.

DARWINIAN FITNESS An organism's success in passing on the genes to subsequent generations.

DETERMINATE LAYERS Birds which cannot be induced to lay additional eggs. Eg: pigeons, doves, *etc*.

DIGITALS Primary feathers attached to second and third digit bones.

DIMORPHIC Occuring in two forms especially sexual dimorphism or having more than one form of plumage.

DIURNAL Active during day. (Opp: Nocturnal).

DOWN FEATHERS Feathers covering the nestlings resembling the filoplumes. Also called plumules.

DRUMMING The drumming note or mechanical sounds produced by certain birds on the tree trunk.
These are called song-substitutes.

ECDYSIS Ecdysis is the process of shedding of old worn out feathers seasonally or annually. This changing plumage is also described as moulting. In Penguins all feathers are shed at the same time. During summer the adult ducks go into heavy moult, losing their flight feathers and temporarily becoming flight less. [Moult following the wear and tear of the breeding season and starting the bird off for migration is called post-nuptial moult. Moult in spring starting the bird out in a new suit for the coming breeding season is called pre-nuptial moult which is connected with the sexual display before breeding. The moult by which down feather is replaced by the juvenile plumage is called post natal moult. Migratory birds do not moult at the time of migration.]

ECLIPSE PLUMAGE The changed plumage after breeding season in birds, is described as eclipse plumage. The male ducks wear a distinctive breeding plumage in summer and revert to female like (or eclipse) plumage in winter making it difficult to identify the sexes.

ECHOLOCATION Location of way and prey by reflected sound waves is called echolocation.
[The oilbird (*Steatornis capensis*) of Trinidad and South America and some swifts of the genus *Collocalia* of South-East Asia and Australia; which nests in dark caves find their way by giving out short clicks and responding in flight to the reflection of these from the walls.]

ECOCLINE Changes that take place in a species as individuals live in different habitats.

ECOLOGY Scientific study of interrelationship of living organisms and their interactions with their environment.

ECOLOGICAL BALANCE The state of equilibrium in an ecosystem where different organisms co-exist in a stable state.

ECOLOGICAL PYRAMID The pyramidal structure of ecosystem in which the base is composed of producer organisms, for example plants, then herbivores and carnivores.

ECOLOGICAL SUCCESSION Series of communities of organisms which follow on one after the other, until a climax community is established

ECOSYSTEM A unit of biosphere which includes living organisms (biotic community or organic environment) and non-living components (abiotic community or inorganic environment) interacting.

ECOTONE Area where two biotopes overlap; transition zone of the border.

EGDE HABITAT It is a habitat zone created by fragmentation of the habitat.

EGG-TOOTH A calcareous structure on the tip of the upper mandible with which the maturing young cracks the egg. Then the egg is said to be "pipped". A special muscle, the hatching muscle developed at the back of the head and neck of the embryo enables to work the egg tooth with increasing force.

EMARGINATION Reduction in the anterior part of the base of some of the primaries resulting in increase in the gaps or slots in the wing. This reduces the turbulence round the ends of the wings.

ENCEPHALOMYELITIS Disease caused by virus harboured by many birds and transmitted to humans through mosquitoes, ticks, *etc*.